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ABSTRACT

A preliminary study of the syntactic characteristics of the imperative construction in modern Chinese is presented. The term "imperative" is used to refer to the type of syntactic construction which is marked by an implicit or explicit second person subject, and which expresses a direct command. Indirect or implied commands expressed by a declarative statement or a rhetorical question are not included. It is concluded that the imperative in Chinese is a complex, embedded sentence in the deep structure, consisting of a matrix sentence with a (+2nd person) pronoun as subject, the verb YAO1, YAO2, YONG; ZHUN, etc. as the imperative main verb, and a complement sentence with also a (+2nd person) pronoun subject. The verb phrase which appears in the surface structure is derived from the complement sentence in the deep structure. The subject of this complement sentence is obligatorily deleted in the surface structure. Some of the structural restrictions of the imperative are described, and a list of references concludes the paper. (PP)

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THE IMPERATIVE IN CHINESE'

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0. Scope of the present study

This paper presents a preliminary study on the syntactic characteristics of the imperative construction in modern Chinese (Mandarin). The term "imperative" will be used to refer to the type of syntactic construction which is marked by an implicit or explicit second person subject, and which expresses a direct command. It is to be taken as a purely syntactic term. An example of the imperative construction is: QÙ! 'go!'[1] Indirect or implied

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"commands," which may be expressed by a declarative statement in the form of a warning such as: JINZHI CHOU YAN 'no smoking' (literally, 'prohibit smoke cigarette') or by a rhetorical question such as: ZENME BU GEI TA YI GE?! 'why don't (you) give him one?!' (literally, 'why not give him one (classifier)') will not be included. We shall also put aside, in this study, the problem of the co-occurrence of various sentence particles with the imperative construction. These sentence particles, together with the sentence intonations, usually reflect the attitude of the addresser vis-à-vis the addressee or the situation, and as a result, speech forms marked by such sentence particles express requests, pleas, suggestion, warnings, etc. For lack of a thorough study on these sentence particles, we shall limit our discussion and conclusion mainly to the types of imperatives unmarked by sentence particles (or, marked by the zero sentence particle), and shall only slightly touch upon the subject of sentence particles and intonations in section 1.4.

Many traditional linguists discuss the imperative form not so much as a distinct syntactic type comparable to, for example, the interrogative construction, but rather as a matter of intonation or of sentence particles.[2] It is undeniable that intonation and sentence particles play a significant role in the imperative construction in Chinese, as we shall see in section 1.4; on the other hand, these two are not the only important features which figure in the imperative construction, so that a thorough description of the imperative should take into account all aspects of its structure rather than merely these two.[3]

1. Syntactic features of the imperative construction in Chinese

1.1 Verb phrases and noun phrases

In the surface structure, that is, the structure manifested in the speech form which we speak or hear, the imperative construction in Chinese is

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seemingly simple. It can appear in the form of a single verb or verb phrase, as in:

1. LAI!
   'come!'
2. CHI!
   'eat!'

or in the form of a single noun or noun phrase, as in:

3. SHUI!
   'water!'
4. QIANBI!
   'pencil!'

Longer verb phrases or noun phrases are not uncommon. For example:

5. MINGTIAN GEN GEGE YIQI LAI!
   'tomorrow with elder-brother together come' = 'come with your elder brother tomorrow!'
6. MANMANDE CHI!
   'slowly eat' = 'eat slowly!'
7. YI BEI RESHUI!
   'one glass hot-water' = 'a glass of hot water!'
8. NEI SAN ZHI CHANG DE QIANBI!
   'those three (classifier) long (particle) pencil' = 'those three long pencils!'

Negative forms of the imperative construction, sometimes referred to as prohibitions, seem equally simple. Negative commands in the form of verb phrases differ from affirmative commands only in the presence of the negative marker BIE which is used exclusively for the imperative.[4] The respective negative counterparts of examples #1, 2, 5, 6 are as follows:

9. BIE LAI!
   'don't come!'
10. BIE CHI!

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'don't eat!'

11. MINGTIAN BIE GEN GEGE YIQI LAI!

= 'don't come with elder brother tomorrow!'

12. BIE MANMANDE CHI!

= 'don't eat slowly!'

However, commands in the form of noun phrases cannot be directly negated by BIE, since no noun in Chinese can be negated directly.[5] Consequently, the negative counterparts of examples #3, 4, 7, 8 must take the form of negated verb phrases such as the following:

13. BIE GEI WO SHUI!

'don't give me water!'

14. BIE GEI WO QIANBI!

= 'don't give me any pencil!'

15. BIE GEI WO YI BEI RESHUI!

= 'don't give me a glass of hot water!'

16. BIE GEI WO NEI SAN ZHI CHANG DE QIANBI!

= 'don't give me those three long pencils!'

while forms like:

17. *BIE SHUI!

'don't water!'

.

.

.

are ungrammatical. This hints at the conclusion that, in actual fact, imperatives with single noun phrases may not be so simple as they appear to be. When a person utters the word "SHUI!" ('water') with proper intonation of the imperative, he is actually asking or ordering someone to give him water, which amounts to saying "GEI WO SHUI!" in abbreviated fashion, if we are going to take the meaning of this imperative noun phrase correctly. We shall return to this problem in section 2.1.

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Concerning the negative form of the imperative construction, the word BIE has often been described as the contracted or abbreviated form of BU YAO.[6] However, Li Wang rejects the idea that BIE is the fusion of BU plus YAO on the phonetic ground that BU + YAO should yield the fusion BIAO and not BIE.[7] Whether this argument is plausible or not does not weigh against considering the two forms as synonyms if they are found to be so. The crucial point is then: are the two forms semantic alternants? It is difficult to give a clear answer, since there are hardly any true synonyms in any language. BIE and BU YAO may not occur under the same pragmatic situation, and many speakers feel that the use of BIE may invoke a stronger and more abrupt demand while the use of BU YAO gives a much softer hue. In other words, the impression and effect involved with these two expressions are not quite the same, so that they may be rejected as synonyms. On the other hand, we may also consider them as semantic alternants and account for the difference as stylistic, to be taken care of by stylistic rules, since the two forms are not distinct in cognitive meaning; in fact, they do not seem to have cognitive meaning of their own save the function of negating a command.[8] Consequently, we shall follow the second interpretation and consider BIE as the contraction of BU YAO with the provision that any stylistic difference between the two is to be accounted for by a stylistic rule that effects the contraction. Before passing, we may mention that BIE and BU YAO may be used all by themselves as commands:

18. BIE! or BU YAO!
'don't!'

Another negative form of the imperative consists of BUYONG or BENG 'need not' which is apparently different in meaning from both BIE and BU YAO; the latter carry no cognitive meaning of their own except that of negative function, while the former has the meaning of 'need to' or 'have to' in addition to the negative meaning. Hence the following do not coincide in meaning with examples #9, 10, ... :

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19. BENG LAI! or BUYONG LAI!
'don't need to come!'

20. BENG CHI! or BUYONG CHI!
'don't need to eat!'

.
.
.

That BENG is the fusion of BUYONG is not controversial, and a parallel stylistic difference to that between BIE and BU YAO can also be found between BENG and BUYONG.

1.2 Double negative imperative

The features of the imperative construction in Chinese discussed so far are also shared by a language like English or Japanese. Different from both English and Japanese is the existence of "double negative" imperative forms in Chinese which have no syntactic equivalents in the other two languages mentioned,[9] although these double negative imperatives are far less popular or frequent in usage. Some examples are:[10]

21. BIE BU QU!
'don't not go' = no equivalent expression in English

22. BIE BU YAO SHUI LA
'don't not want water (particle)' = 'don't you not want water!'

23. BIE BU XIN TA DE HUA!
'don't not believe he (possessive marker) speech' = 'don't disbelieve his words!'

all of which may have BU YAO substituted for BIE without significant change of meaning. On the other hand, if BENG or BUYONG is used instead of BIE in the above examples, the sentences will carry the meaning of 'don't (not) ... because you don't need to,' for example:

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24. BENG BU XIN TA DE HUA or BUYONG BU XIN TA DE HUA!

= 'don't disbelieve his words because you don't need to!'

In the double negative imperative sentences, the order of the negative words is always BIE, BU YAO or BENG, BUYONG followed by BU, and never vice-versa, which means that we have a case of a negative verb phrase occurring in negative imperative form. Nor can there be a sequence of two negative imperative markers *BIE BIE ... in the double negative imperative construction, although the word BIE used alone as a command may be repeated in a sequence such as:

25. BIE! BIE!

'don't! don't!'

which has no meaning whatsoever of a double imperative, but is simply a repetition in utterance for the sake of emphasis.

1.1 Imperative with expressed subject

An interesting characteristic of the Chinese imperative is that a subject noun phrase can appear in the surface structure: namely, the addressee of the command is mentioned in the form of the second person pronoun NI (singular) or NIMEN (plural);[11] although more often the subject is omitted. The subject pronoun NI or NIMEN may be added to all of the foregoing examples, except for those containing single noun phrases; for example:

1'. NI LAI!

= 'you come!'

2'. NIMEN CHI!

'you eat!'

14'. NIMEN BIE GEI WO SHUI!

= 'don't you give me any water!'

.

.

.

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This kind of command with an expressed subject seems to be more frequent with negative imperatives.

When an imperative with an expressed subject is in the affirmative, the verb phrase may have a seemingly "alternative form" with YAO.[12] For example:

26. NI YAO LAI!
'you will come!'

27. NIMEN YAO CHI!
'you (plural) will eat!'

The YAO here reminds us of the alternative form BU YAO or BIE, which might lead us to think that the YAO in question must be the affirmative counterpart of BU YAO (or BIE). However, while the YAO of BU YAO has no cognitive meaning of its own, the YAO here does have its own meaning of 'need to' or 'must,' which is in fact the opposite meaning of BUYONG or BENG. Moreover, since there is no affirmative counterpart of BUYONG, YONG being not in use, the YAO here may best be considered as such a counterpart, although in shape it should be the affirmative counterpart of BU YAO or BIE. This incongruence of phonetic shape and meaning may have been due to some restructuring of vocabulary items after YONG has largely disappeared in usage as free form.[13] In any case, examples #26 and 27 differ in meaning from examples #1' and 2', and cannot be considered as alternative forms of the latter.

With respect to the subject noun phrase NI or NIMEN which occurs in the imperative, it is to be distinguished from the vocative form which may appear in front of an imperative sentence. This vocative form usually consists of a proper name or a pronoun, such as:

28. ZHANG SAN, LAI!
'Zhang San, come!'

29. NI, LAI!
'you, come!'

When a pronoun is used in the vocative, always in the second person, the addresser, in giving the command, is usually either pointing at the addressee

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or trying to attract his attention. The vocative form may always be separated from the command proper by a pause, whereas the subject of the type of command in question may not be so separated. In other words, a potential pause (in the phonological sense) occurs between the vocative and the command proper, but not between the subject and the predicate of the command. Of course, when the addresser is in a state of excitement or annoyance, the command may be so uttered that the subject pronoun is pronounced in repeated sequences broken from the following verb phrase, as in:

30. NI, NI, NI, ... NI GANKUAI GEI WO GUEN!

'you, you, you, ... you immediately for me scram' = 'you, you, you, ... you immediately scram for my benefit!'

Even then, as can be seen from the example above, the last occurrence of NI is still often followed by the verb phrase without any pause. Furthermore, the subject pronoun of the imperative can occur side by side with, and hence should not be confused with, a vocative; for instance:

28a. ZHANG SAN, NI LAI!

'Zhang San, you come!'

Pronouns in reduced form, that is, in neutral tone, usually follow the command proper, as in:

31. NIMEN LAI, .NI.MEN![14]

'you (pl.) come, you!'

31a. LAI, .NI.MEN!

'come, you (pl.)!'

these should be considered as the "copy" or repetition of the subject pronoun which may (as in the case of #31) or may not (as in the case of #31a) appear in the surface structure, for emphatic or insistent effect. That both the subject and its "copy" may occur simultaneously argues against regarding such reduced forms as subject in the so-called "inverted" position.

1.4 Intonation and sentence particles

In the discussions above, we have taken for granted that all the examples

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are pronounced with the proper intonation of the imperative construction. Unfortunately not much has been done in the analysis of intonations so that our description here is merely a crude perceptual account. So far the main features of the imperative intonation have been best described by Y. R. Chao.[15] In general, a command carries falling intonation; in addition, the last few syllables of the sentence, if it is long, are accelerated in tempo.[16] However, the intonation of a statement or narrative sentence is also marked by a falling contour, so that intonation alone may not be sufficient to distinguish a command from a statement. For example, NIMEN CHI pronounced at andante tempo may be a statement with the meaning of 'you (plural) eat,' or a soft-spoken command with the meaning of 'eat!'

Of course there are different gradations of acceleration as well as forcefulness in intonation which mark off different types of commands on the scale of urgency and compulsion. These differences are closely related to the emotional state of the speaker and are of more pragmatic than syntactic interest. Their fine shades will not be of concern to us here.

We may mention in this connection that there is a polite form of command which bears the same type of intonation as the regular type of command but differs from it in having the polite form QING ('please,' originally derived from a verb) preceding the verb. Hence, the following sentence is a more polite command than example #2:

12. (NI) QING CHI. or QING (NI) CHI![17]

'(you) please eat!'

QING may thus be considered a polite particle of the imperative.

The rising intonation is also used for the imperative construction with the effect of a peremptory command. Chao distinguishes a command with falling ending from one with rising ending by characterizing the former as a remonstrance and the latter a peremptory command, the former softer in tone "though just as firm and insistent" as the latter.[18]

A command may be changed not only in tone but also in quality by the

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occurrence of certain sentence particles, a process which usually involves an addition of information in comparison with the plain commands discussed so far, for different sentence particles project different shades of the addresser's attitude towards the addressee with respect to the "command" uttered or the general situation or the personal relation. Although the description of such types are not our main concern here, we shall give a brief sketch of them for comparison.[19] We shall name these forms by their particles in order to distinguish them in nomenclature from the kind of direct command which we are describing: the BA-type, marked by the sentence particle BA, has already been mentioned at the beginning of this paper, where it is considered a form of request.[20] Others are: the A-type, marked by the sentence particle A and its phonetic variants,[21] which has the meaning of urging with the implication "why don't ... do so?"; the OU-type, marked by the sentence particle OU, which carries the meaning of warning to a certain extent with such implication as "do so, otherwise ... "; the BALE-type,[22] which is an impatient suggestion with the meaning of "hurry up and do so and so." Examples of these various types are:

33. LAI A!

'why don't you come!'

34. LAI OU!

= 'come, otherwise ... !'

35. LAI BALE!

= 'hurry up and come!'

The A-type should not be confused with the case in which a simple imperative is followed by the tag-like A but always with a pause in between:

36. LAI, A!

'come! will you?'

2. Simple or complex?

We want to examine our understanding of the various imperative forms,

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affirmative and negative, which are apparently somehow related to each other, by finding out the deep structures which underlie the semantic interpretation of these constructions. We want to find out whether the usual description of the imperative construction as consisting of noun phrases or verb phrases, or as a simple structure, accounts for all the syntactic points observed so far.

7.1 Underlying subject

Single noun phrases can be understood as commands only if they are uttered in proper contexts. When a peasant or a riddle or a participant in a quiz shouts "SHUI!" the noun phrase in this context is to be understood as an answer to a previously stated question; but when an exhausted traveller pronounces the word "SHUI!" it is to be understood as "QEI WO SHUI" ('give me water'), that is, as a command.[21] Syntactically the mere utterance of "SHUI" is ambiguous since it can be understood in more than one way; in other words, it has more than one underlying structure. And it is the underlying structure of the imperative that we are trying to describe.

In order to capture correctly the meaning of the noun phrase or the verb phrase imperatives, we must assume that they are all derived from complete sentences in their deep structure.[22] Moreover, in order to account for, not only the possible appearance of a surface subject in the form of the second person pronoun in the imperative sentences, but also our understanding of the imperative as a command addressed necessarily to an addressee (or a group of addressees) in the second person in Chinese,[23] the deep structure of the imperative construction must consist of a second person pronoun subject, which is to be described as optionally omissible in the surface structure.[24]

In support of this claim, we may mention that the form BIE in commands does not occur with any subject noun phrase except the second person pronoun:[25]

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37. *WO BIE QU!

'I don't go!'

38. *TAMEN BIE CHI![28]

'they don't eat!'

That only a second person subject is implicitly or explicitly expressed in commands is also reflected in the use of the reflexive pronoun ZIJI '-self' in this kind of sentence, where only the second person reflexive seems to be possible:

39. DA NI-ZIJI!

'hit yourself!'

40. *DA WO ZIJI!

'hit myself!'

41. *DA TA-ZIJI!

'hit himself!'

Forms like ZANMEN BIE QU! ('let's not go') also exist. This argues for positing the first inclusive plural, which contains the feature [+2nd person] as possible underlying subject of the imperative construction too. Moreover, the first inclusive plural pronoun can occur in reduced "copy" form, as the second person pronoun can:

42. JIN-LAI, .NI.MEN!

'come-in, you (plural)!'

43. JIN-QU, ZAN.MEN!

'go-in, we (first inclusive plural)!'

At this point, it should be clarified that with requests, urgings, warnings, suggestions, etc., (namely, those constructions which are marked by special sentence particles) both the second person subject and the first person inclusive subject,[29] may also be used; for example:

44. ZANMEN QU A!

'why don't we go!'

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45. ZANMEN ZOU BALE!

'let's hurry up and go!'

46. WOMEN CHI BA!

'let us eat!'

47. ZANMEN XIAOXIN OU!

'let's be careful, otherwise ... '

3.2 The status of BIE

BIE has most commonly been considered as a negative auxiliary which marks the imperative construction or as the fusion of the negative marker BU plus an auxiliary YAO. Regarding either BIE as a negative auxiliary or YAO as an auxiliary would lead to the conclusion that the imperative is a simple structure which can be defined by the occurrence of only one main verb in the whole sentence.[10] However, the existence of double negative imperatives argues for the contrary. In Chinese, only verbs or verb phrases can be negated; in other words, in case there are more than one negative markers or more than one negated phrases (except for negative compounds) in a sentence, there must necessarily be more than one verb in that sentence.[11] Consequently, a double negative imperative sentence contains two verbs, of which the matrix verb is YAO, to which we shall ascribe the subscript $_1$ in order to distinguish it from other homophonous forms. YAO_1 may be called the imperative verb, which has the morphophonemic property of fusing with the negative marker to assume the complex form of BIE.[12] This imperative verb may not have any cognitive meaning but simply serves as the verb for the imperative construction.

Now, if we want to give a consistent meaning and a consistent structure to both the affirmative and the negative imperative forms which are evidently related, the imperative verb YAO_1 must necessarily be posited as the underlying main verb in the deep structure of the affirmative imperative construction too, with the provision that it is obligatorily deleted in the

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surface structure of the latter.

Thus, our conclusion is that the imperative is a complex construction in Chinese; it is an embedding construction with the verb YAO_1 in the matrix sentence, and the verb phrase which appears in the surface structure is to be derived from a complement sentence in the deep structure. The subject of this complement sentence can be considered a pronoun with [+2nd person] feature, to be obligatorily deleted in the surface structure.

It may not be correct to say that the verb YAO_1 must necessarily be the matrix verb of the imperative construction. A small class of verbs, all of which are mutually exclusive with YAO_1, may be the imperative matrix verb. For example, BIE or BU YAO_1 apparently does not co-occur with the homophonous form of YAO_1, namely, the form YAO meaning 'must' which will henceforth be marked as YAO_2, as well as BENG or BUYONG 'need not,' and BU ZHUN 'not allowed,' due to the nonexistence of such imperative forms as:

48. *BIE YAO_2 LAI!
'don't must come!'

49. *BIE BUYONG LAI!
'don't not-need come!'

50. *BIE BU ZHUN LAI!'
'don't not-allowed (to) come!'

YAO_2, YONG and ZHUN should also be regarded as possible underlying matrix verbs. However, YONG and ZHUN do not occur in the affirmative form. Hence, under conditions to be stated below, the main verb of the imperative construction may be one of these: the imperative verb YAO_1, the verb YAO_2 'must,' the verb YONG 'need,' the verb ZHUN 'allow,' etc. The first two can occur in the deep structure of either the affirmative or the negative imperative; but the last two are restricted to negative imperative forms. In the surface structure, the first one is always deleted, the rest are undeletable and YAO_2 appears in the affirmative imperative only if the subject pronoun also occurs.

2.1 The imperative complement

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So far we have not touched upon the nature and the features of the imperative verb phrase, which on the basis of the foregoing discussion, we now assume to be derived from an underlying sentence. While the matrix verb is restricted to a few members, most verbs which can occur with human subjects can occur as main verb of the imperative complement verb phrase. These are usually action verbs. Descriptive verbs or adjectives are limited mostly to those in reduplicated forms or forms with comparative measures:[11]

51. GUAIGUAI DE!

= 'be good!'

52. KUAI DIANR!

= 'quicker!'

Some verbs of thought and perception occur in the imperative while others do not; the same applies to optative verbs. We shall not go into details here. Three types of verb, however, do not generally occur as main verbs in the imperative complement: the locative verb, the possessive verb and the copula, although the first two may occur in the negative imperative.

53. *ZAI JIA-LI!

'locate home!'

but:

54. ZAI JIA-LI CHI!

'eat at home!'

55. BIE ZAI JIA!

'don't be at home!'

Similarly, the possessive verb YOU does not occur in the affirmative imperative if it is to function as main verb in the embedded sentence:

56. *YOU SHU!

'have book!'

but:

57. BIE PA YOU SHU!

'don't fear have book' = 'don't be afraid of having books!'

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58. BIE YOU HUI DUO QIAN!

'don't possess very much money!'

The copula SHI occurs only in quasi-imperative forms such as the following:[15]

59. BIE SHI DIU-DIAO -LE

'don't be lost (perfective aspect)' = 'better not be that (it was) lost'

60. BA BIE YE SHI GE PIANZI

'he don't also be (classifier) swindler' = 'better not be that he is also a swindler'

which are not imperative forms as such but rather expressions of a wish or conjecture of the speaker.

Verbs occurring in the imperative complement can take aspect markers only under certain conditions, although they may freely occur with the latter in other types of constructions. There seem to be a few cases in which the perfective aspect marker -LE appears with the complement verb.[16] The imperative complement verb can, in general, take -LE if the complement is a complex sentence and if the verb in question occurs in the dependent clause. For example, as a command, one can say:

61. CHI -LE FAN QU!

'eat (perfective asp.) rice then go' = 'go after having eaten!'

but not:

62. *CHI -LE FAN!

'eat (perfective asp.) rice!'

Secondly, with the executive BA-construction, the complement verb can take -LE:

63. BA FAN CHI -LE!

='eat up the rice!'

Thirdly, the complement verb can take -LE if it is a resultative verb:

64. TING-QINGCHU -LE![17]

'listen-clear (perfective asp.)' = 'listen carefully!'

Lastly, the complement verb can take -LE in the following kind of sentence:

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65. BIE MI -LE LU!

'don't lost (pertective asp.) way' = 'don't get lost!'

which represents a type consisting of expressions with the so-called mocked object, or with certain close combinations of verb plus object, as yet to be explained.

With respect to the continuous aspect marker -ZHE,[38] there seem to be no such restrictions:[39]

66. NIMEN XIAN CHI -ZHE!

'you (plural) first eat -ing' = 'you be eating first!'

Besides aspect markers, we can mention the final particle LE, which is the only final particle which occurs in negative commands otherwise than as an intonational particle reflecting the attitude of the speaker. LE indicates a new situation. Strictly speaking, LE should be a constituent of the matrix sentence and not the complement, since the change of situation applies to the whole complement:

67. BIE CHI LE!

'don't eat any-more!'

When LE occurs in an affirmative expression, the whole expression is not a command but simply an exclamation:

68. CHI LE!

'eat begin-to' = '(let's) begin to eat!'

with not necessarily an underlying second person subject, unless the matrix verb YAO_2 also occurs; compare #68 with #69:

69. NI YAO_2 CHI LE!

'you must start eating!'

Sentence adverbials such as YEXU, HUOZHE 'may be' ... which can usually occur with any kind of verb, do not occur in the imperative construction -- neither in the matrix nor in the complement:

70. *YEXU LAI!

'maybe come!'

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Finally, the imperative complement must not be a negative sentence unless the matrix sentence is also a negative sentence, otherwise we will generate such ungrammatical expressions as:

71. *BU LAI!
'not come!'

7.4 Some structural restrictions

The imperative construction as a whole may be a nominalized object NP of a small class of verbs including JIAO 'ask,' QING 'ask (polite form),' GAOSONG 'tell,' QIU 'beg,' QUAN 'advise,' SHIYI 'hint,' JINGGAO 'warn,' etc. When the imperative occurs as a nominalized object NP the subject is always deleted in the surface structure. Some examples are:

72. ZHANG SAN JIAO LISI BIE LAI
'Zhang San ask Li Si don't come' = 'Zhang San asked Li Si not to come'

73. TA QUAN WO CHI[40]
'he advise me eat' = 'he advised me to eat'

Imperative sentences conjoin or subjoin only with other imperative sentences (including requests, etc.), time clauses, or conditional sentences, but not with narrative or interrogat... or exclamatory sentences:

74. ZHAN -ZHE BIE DONG!
'stand still, don't move!'

75. BIE LUOSUO LE, KUAI CHUAN YIFU BA
'don't grumble any more, hurry up (and) get dressed, I advise you!'

76. YAOSHI XIA YU LEMA, NI JIU BENG DENG!
'if fall rain (final particle), you then needn't wait' = 'if it rains, then you needn't wait!'

77. JIN -LE MEN ZAI JIANG!
'enter (perfective asp.) door again speak' = 'speak after

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entering inside!'

78. *XIA YU LE NI BEN DENG!

'fall rain begin-to you needn't wait'

79. *XIA-ZHE YU MA? NI BENG DENG LE!

'fall (continuous aspect) rain (interrogative particle) you needn't wait any-more'

80. YU XIA DE HUANG DA! NI BENG DE LE!

'rain fall (complement particle) how heavily! you needn't wait any-more'

#78 is possible only if the two clauses are taken as two separate sentences in a sequence or if the first clause is taken to be a conditional sentence beginning with JIASU ('if'). Similarly, #79 and #80 are possible only if the two sentences in each case are taken as separate sentences.

In section 1.3 we mentioned the term A as a tag for the imperative construction. Another tag for the same is HAO-BU-HAO:

81. QIN QU, HAO-BU-HAO!

'don't go, will you (or, all right)?'

It is also separated from the command proper by a pause.

4. Summary

To sum up, what we have proposed in this paper is to treat the imperative construction in Chinese as a complex embedding sentence in the deep structure, consisting of a matrix sentence with a [+2nd person] pronoun as subject, the verb YAO$_1$, YAO$_2$, YONG, ZHUN, etc. as the imperative main verb, and a complement sentence with also a [+2nd person] pronoun subject. In the surface structure, the subject of the matrix sentence may be optionally omitted and that of the complement must be obligatorily deleted. When the matrix verb is negated, fusions may take place, resulting in such forms as BIE or BENG.

The deep structure of, for instance, example #21 may be represented by

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the following simplified tree-diagram:

where S = sentence, NP = noun phrase, BU = negative marker,[41] VP = verb phrase.

The surface structure of #21 is arrived at by a series of transformations which apply to all imperative sentences. These are: an obligatory rule deleting the subject of the embedded complement sentence due to the identity condition (being identical with the subject of the matrix sentence) upon embedding (this is in fact a general deletion rule for almost all cases of embedding), a stylistic rule eliding the matrix subject in all cases except when the matrix verb is YAO_2 and BU does not exist in the matrix sentence; and an optional morphophonemic rule yielding the fusion BIE for the combination of BU plus YAO_1 and the fusion of BENG for BU plus YONG. As far as the present example is concerned, following the convention of applying rules to the innermost structures first,[42] the NP of the complement sentence is obligatorily deleted as follows:

Next, the NP of the matrix sentence is optionally deleted, and BU + YAO_1 is optionally given the contracted form of BIE:

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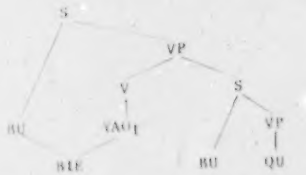

In formulating the deep structure of the imperative construction, we have purposely left out an important point, and that is how the meaning of a command should be represented in or derivable from the underlying syntactic structure. A sentence like NI QU, NI YAO_2 QU, or NI BENG QU given without any appropriate context can be taken either as a statement or as a command, and the deep structure we have provided so far for the imperative cannot distinguish it from the narrative type of sentence. Since Katz and Postal have proposed and well argued for the positing of different morphemes to represent different sentence types in the deep structure[9] -- for example, an imperative morpheme with the general meaning of "the addresser orders the addressee that ..." distinguishing imperative sentences from all others by providing a basis to account for not only the different semantic interpretation but also the distinct syntactic features of the imperative from other sentence types, we shall not repeat the argument here and shall merely tacitly admit the necessity of adding to our deep structure representation such a morpheme in whatever form suitable to languages in general. Moreover, all the rules we have mentioned earlier, except the identity deletion rule, are to be triggered only by the appearance of such an imperative morpheme in the deep structure.

One remaining problem. Our syntactic analysis of the imperative construction in Chinese has not thrown any light on the fact, well-known (due to Roman Jakobson), that the affirmative imperative form is among the earliest syntactic types, or maybe the earliest, acquired by a child learning to speak a language. This fact would argue for treating at least the affirmative imperative as a simple rather than a complex structure. However, since

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little is known of how the process of a child's acquisition of language should best be revealed in our analysis of the language (maybe by means of the marked and unmarked convention discussed recently in phonological analysis), we shall leave the question open.

* * * * *

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FOOTNOTES

*The present paper emerges from a bundle of ideas stimulated by the comments of Professor Fang-kuei Li on my discussion of the verb "to be" in connection with the imperative form in my article "The verb 'to be' in modern Chinese" which will appear in Foundations of Language Supplementary Series, Volumes on "Being," Part 4. I am especially indebted to Professor Li for the interesting examples he furnished me with, all of which will appear in the following discussions.

The outline of an earlier version of this paper was read before the Thirteenth International Conference of Orientalists in Japan, Tokyo, May 1968. Thanks are due to Professor Yuen Ren Chao, Professor Shirō Hattori, Professor Fang-kuei Li and Professor Akiyasu Maō for their valuable comments, as well as to the members of the Chinese Linguistics Seminar, Princeton University, for their various suggestions. The present study is supported by the Chinese Linguistics Project, Princeton University.

1. Transcription of Chinese in this paper follows the Pinyin System of the China mainland, with the exception that tones are unmarked. All transcriptions are capitalized.

2. See for example J. Li 1924, Wang 1943 and 1944, Ding et al. 1961, etc.

3. Ming-kai Gao, (p. 391 of Gao 1957) by stressing the point that "the imperative is not only the problem of the verb, but the problem of the whole sentence" expresses more or less the same view.

4. The common negative marker for verbs in Chinese is BU.

5. Except, of course, for the so-called negative compounds, such as BU-MAO 'infertile,' BU-FA 'illegal,' etc., which anyway fall outside our statement, since the negative marker there has already become a member of the compound word, and no longer serves as a syntactic class.

6. See Li 1947, p. 310; Ding, et al. 1961, p. 199; Kuraishi 1963, p. 37; Hashimoto 1966, pp. 175-177; Chao 1968, p. 747; etc.

7. See p. 415 of Wang 1944. Fang-kuei Li has also expressed his skepticism over BIE as a contracted form of BU YAO (by private correspondence) on the ground that double negative imperatives exist.

8. The BU YAO in question is not to be confused with the negated form of the verb YAO meaning 'to want' as in:

WO BU YAO SHU
'I not want book' = 'I don't want any book'

Compare the two different YAO's in:

NI BU YAO QU JIU BU YAO QU!
'you not want go then don't go' = '(if) you don't want to go, don't go!'

9. Forms like:

You cannot but agree!

or:

Do not distrust me!

in English are "double negative" in meaning, but they are not the syntactic equivalents of the Chinese double negative imperative forms discussed here. In the first place, while the Chinese double negative imperative involves the double use of the negative marker BU as we

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shall see below, it is doubtful if "but" in English can be considered a negative marker on a par with "not." Secondly, while the two terms in the Chinese double negative imperative are negated at the syntactic level or the level higher than the category V (Verb), words like "distrust" in English are negated at the morphological level or the level lower than the category V. Finally, the first sentence given here is not a form of direct command expressed by the imperative construction in English like the second one is, but rather an indirect command or a suggestion expressed by the declarative construction.

10. Examples #21 and #22 are Professor Fang-kuei Li's.

11. The polite or honorific form of the two pronouns are NIN and NIN-MEN respectively.

12. This YAO is also distinct from the verb YAO 'to want,' already mentioned in footnote 8. Some speakers consider the use of the form YAO in affirmative imperative sentences "odd," and would rather use a form like DEI 'must' in similar contexts.

13. Nowadays YONG appears in common usage either in the negative form BU-YONG as already mentioned, or in the V-not-V form, i.e., the alternative question form made up of the affirmative and the negative counterparts of a verb phrase, which is YONG BU-YONG in this case. However, YONG is no longer used outside of these two contexts. A sentence like YONG BU-YONG QU? 'is it necessary to go?' is of frequent use, while one like *YONG QU! 'must go!' is out of use, although in the first case BU-YONG cannot take the form of BENG: *YONG BENG QU! I am indebted to Professors Y. R. Chao and F.K. Li for the observation on the form of YONG BU-YONG, which can in fact be considered as a compound.

14. This and the following example are due to Professor Y. R. Chao, although they are changed versions of his original examples with the final particle BA:

NIMEN LAI BA, .NI.MEN!
LAI BA, .NI.MEN!

15. Chao's description can be gathered here and there in Chao 1926 and Chao 1968.

16. Chao 1968, p. 41.

17. This QING, considered a polite particle here, is not to be confused with the verb QING 'invite, ask politely,' from which the former is probably derived. The verb QING occurs in complex narrative sentences which take the imperative as complement, for example:

WO QING NI LAI
'I ask-politely you come' = 'I politely ask you to come'

Furthermore, the verb QING can take aspect markers like -LE but not the polite particle QING. Compare:

WO QING -LE NI LAI
= 'I have politely asked you to come'
WO MEI QING NI LAI
= 'I have not politely asked you to come'

with:

*QING -LE (NI) LAI! or *(NI) QING -LE LAI!
*QING (NI) MEI LAI! or *(NI) QING MEI LAI!

18. See Chao 1968, p. 814.

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19. See Chao 1926 and section 5.5.1 of Chao 1968.

20. The four different meanings possible for the MA-type, contingent upon different intonation contours as described in Chao 1926, pp. 866-867, with the example of MÀ or MÀ may be considered as the outcome of emotional modifications. A thorough study of intonational contours and the resulting delicate semantic differences is due before one can give a systematic correlation of the two.

21. The particle A [a] links freely with the preceding phonetic segment resulting in liaisons like [ĩa], [ũa], [ua] ... if preceded by [ĩ], [ũ], [u] ... respectively. The only exceptions occur when it is preceded by the phonemes [a] and [e], in which case it always assumes the shape of [ña]. See p. 801 of Chao 1968. This A-type is always spoken with raised pitch.

22. Some speakers reject the BAI-type, which may have become obsolete with them. Chao also lists JIUSHÌI as an alternative particle. See p. 807 of Chao 1926 and p. 811 of Chao 1968. However, JIUSHÌLE is derivable from the verb phrase JIU SHÌ LE 'and that's it' although phonetically it has become a highly reduced form.

23. Chao describes noun phrase imperatives as "commands in the form of things desired." See Chao 1965, p. 66. These may suggest a deep structure (see below for explanation) such as the following:

WO YAO SHUÌ!
'I want water!'

which is a declaration rather than a direct command. At the same time, it is undeniable that these noun phrases may be interpreted as commands too.

24. Chao listed a few cases of adverbs and adverbials as commands, such as: KUAI! 'hurry!' or YIQÌ! 'together!' (see Chao 1968, p. 771). These can also be considered as derived from complete sentences in the deep structure.

25. That this is so is reflected in the fact that no command is ever uttered in the absence of any audience. In the case of a command directed towards oneself, namely, when both the addresser and the addressee of the command refer to the same person, the addresser is invoking part of his ego externalized as the addressee, who is referred to as the second person in the deep structure of the command.

26. Sometimes an address term appears as subject in the surface structure of commands with the verb phrase immediately following without pause, such as:

SHUÌSHUÌ BIE MÀ!
'uncle don't scold!'

This may be considered a polite substitution of the address term for the second person pronoun and hence does not fall outside the claim made here. Alternatively one may regard the address term as a vocative form and describe the lack of a pause as permissible with address terms.

The existence of such commands as:

YIQÌ QÙ!
'together go' = 'go together!'

does not necessarily arise for a subject other than the second person since it can be interpreted as:

NI(MEN) GÊN WO YIQÌ QÙ!
'you (plural marker) with me together go' = 'you go together with me!'

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GEN being a preposition and not a conjunction is supported by the fact that the negative marker always precedes GEN.

17. See section 2.3 for the quasi-imperative BIE which does occur with subjects other than the second person pronouns.

18. Forms like ZANMEN BU CHI are possible only if they are understood as "indirect" commands given through the addressee, so that they carry the meaning of "let them do so and so."

19. ZANMEN is the inclusive first person plural form in the Peking dialect. In other Mandarin dialects, the form WOMEN is used for the first person plural irrespective of the inclusive - exclusive distinction. However, when WOMEN is used in the surface structure of the imperative construction, it always refers to the inclusive first person plural.

20. There are instances of the negative marker followed by a preposition, but what is negated is the whole verb phrase beginning with that preposition, as in:

TA BU GEI WO MAI SHU
'he not for me buy book' = 'he does not buy books for me'

21. We are here eliminating the possibility of considering BU a modifier of verbs and other syntactic classes as well (including the consideration of it as a nonsyntactic unit, such as a prefix on the morphological level). The reason is that allowing BU to negate all sorts of elements on the syntactic level would involve either positing more than one negative marker in the underlying structure or regarding negation as purely morphological. By positing more than one negative marker in the deep structure -- for example, one for negating auxiliary verbs, one for negating adverbs, one for negating verbs, etc. would mean recognizing constituent negation in addition to sentence negation and hence unnecessarily complicating the deep structure of sentences; while regarding negation as purely morphological would deny explanation to the difference in grammaticality between a sentence like:

*ZHANG SAN BI LI SI BU AI
'Zhang San comparing Li Si not tall'

and a sentence like:

ZHANG SAN BU BI LI SI AI
'Zhang San not comparing Li Si short' = 'Zhang San is not shorter than Li Si'

or one like:

ZHANG SAN BU AI
'Zhang San not short' = 'Zhang San is not short'

22. There are existent fusions of similar kinds in Chinese: the negative marker always assumes (with very rare exceptions noted by Chao, see Chao 1968, p. 804) the form MEI before the verb YOU either as existential or as possessive verb, such as MEI YOU SHU 'not have book;' but since one can also omit YOU in nominal position and say MEI SHU for the same expression, MEI may be looked upon as the contraction of the negative marker plus the verb YOU in the latter case in order to account for the equivalence in meaning.

23. See Chao 1968, p. 967.

24. *ZAI and *YOU are unacceptable to some speakers, which means that in their grammars ZAI and YOU do not occur as main verb in the imperative complement at all.

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15. For a discussion on the quasi-imperative, see my explanation in "The verb 'to be' in modern Chinese," (mentioned at the beginning of the footnotes), section I.1.

16. The aspect marker -LE should be distinguished from the final particle LE which denotes a change of status.

17. See Chao 1968, section 6.6.1.1(4) for details concerning this type.

18. Sometimes we find a "prefix-like" element ZAI- occurring with -ZHE, such as ZAI- KU -ZHE 'is weeping,' which may lead to considering the progressive or continuous aspect marker as a complex, discontinuous form of ZAI...ZHE. However, for every occurrence of ZAI, one can insert a dummy locative phrase NAR: ZAI NAR KU -ZHE 'is weeping there.'

19. The case is very different in a dialect like Cantonese in which there are two corresponding vocabulary items to the Mandarin -ZHE: one being -GAN (progressive aspect) and the other -JU (continuous aspect). Only the latter can occur in imperative complements.

20. Because of the fact that all negative forms of the nominalized object of these verbs have BIE instead of BU and the same restrictions imposed upon the imperative construction also apply to the complements in question these nominalized NP's including those in the affirmative form must be considered as derived from imperative sentences. See Hashimoto 1966, pp. 174-183 for description of the "imperative complement" of these verbs.

21. The status of BU is controversial. Although we consider it a verb, we shall merely indicate it as a negative marker, since giving supporting arguments for its verbal status is outside the scope of this paper.

22. See Chomsky 1965, p. 143.

23. See Katz and Postal 1964, especially pp. 73-79 for the imperative morpheme.

24. See Chomsky and Halle, 1968; Postal 1968.